

Dear Members of the Vermont House of Representatives,

My name is Katie Gordon, a fourth-year student at the New England College of Optometry, and I am currently completing a clinical rotation in Vermont. I am writing to express my support for S.64 and to add my voice to the letter submitted Monday by Vermont optometrists in favor of this legislation. Unfortunately, I was unable to have my name included before it was sent, so I wanted to reach out personally and share my perspective as a future provider.

As someone preparing to enter the profession, I have followed similar legislative discussions in both Vermont and my home state of Maine with great interest. In many cases, thoughtfully researched legislation aimed at improving patient access to care can become delayed for reasons that extend beyond the practical needs of patients and communities. For students like myself, these conversations matter greatly because they directly influence where we choose to build our careers.

Upon graduation, I will have strong personal and professional ties drawing me back to Maine, including family connections and the opportunity to work alongside my father, who is a practicing optometrist. However, one of the most significant factors influencing where I ultimately practice is whether a state allows optometrists to fully utilize the education, clinical training, and competencies they have worked so hard to achieve.

I entered optometry school with the goal of serving patients and improving access to quality eye care. Legislation such as S.64 supports that mission by creating a framework that balances expanded scope with appropriate education, training, and accountability. From the perspective of a student preparing to transition into practice, Vermont's approach is both thoughtful and forward-looking.

As I consider residency opportunities and long-term career plans over the next several years, the professional environment created by legislation like S.64 will play a substantial role in my decision-making process. Although Maine will always feel like home, the opportunity to practice in a state that recognizes and supports the full extent of my training is deeply meaningful.

I also believe this legislation will make Vermont more attractive to future optometry students and residents across the country. In particular, students from the nearby optometry schools in Massachusetts will be more likely to pursue clinical rotations in Vermont and, ultimately, consider remaining in the state to practice and serve Vermont communities.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to improving access to healthcare in Vermont. I respectfully encourage you to support and pass S.64 during this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Katie Gordon

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(Almost Dr. Katie Gordon)